



MIND OF A CHRISTIAN ATHLETE

 **VARSIITY
CATHOLIC**

UNIT I IN THE MOMENT



Think of your greatest performance. Now, think of your worst performance.

What is the difference?

Chances are the difference was in your head.

If our performance is negatively impacted by distractions, then we should try to minimize this interference so we can be fully in the moment.

In addition to some of the things mentioned above, what are examples of interference we encounter in athletics, or anything related to performance?

anxiety, fear, lack of confidence, weak motivation, excessive emotion, etc.

Take a few moments and write down what has been the most consistent interference in your season thus far, or in your overall career.

In what ways has/does this affect your game and pull you out of the present? Write that down also.

Does anyone know who Karl Malone is? He took a long time to shoot a free throw. He took so long, because he would say a prayer at the line. This is an example of an athlete trying to reduce interference.

Gary Mack – “In the present, there is no pressure.” **How is this true?**

Pressure is created by anxieties about the future and remembered failures from the past. We need to recognize when our mind is no longer in the present. When we recognize this, we need to stop analyzing or judging and simply be absorbed in the task. We need to play fully in the moment.

The best way to do this is to remember who we are. Jesus says at the end of the sermon on the Mount, “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock.” Only on the solid foundation that we are sons and daughters of God, can we live a life free of “interference”.

In what ways might distractions impact us in the Christian life? How does the reality that we are sons & daughters of God help dissipate distractions?

E.G. – If you are trying to honor your parents, what distractions get in the way? If you are trying to be a loving boyfriend, what distractions get in the way? If you are trying to love your neighbor, what distractions get in the way?

In the Christian life, our sinfulness becomes the main source of interference in our life. Think now of the times you are the most loving. Now think of the times you are most like a jerk.

What is the difference?

More than likely, it is related to selfishness.

Write down the biggest struggle (or distraction) for you in living fully the Christian life. In what ways does this harm your relationship with God and those in your life?

Luke 10:38-42 –Mary and Martha –Being vs Doing

- How are Mary and Martha's actions different?
- How does Jesus respond?
- What is the difference between Being and Doing?
 - Being is just being in the moment and being present. Doing is being focused on all that you have to do and getting caught up in all the things that are happening and missing what is going on around you
- What is Martha's biggest distraction?
 - Everything that she has to do to prepare the meal, and get everything ready.
- What are our distractions that keep us from Being in the Moment?
 - Ex. Cell phones in class or when hanging out with others, TV or music during homework

Jesus challenges us to “be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” He wants us to love perfectly as He does.

Fulton Sheen tells the story of when he visited a leper colony in Africa. His hope was to give each of the 500 lepers a small gold crucifix. Here is his recount:

I had with me 500 silver crucifixes about two inches high. I intended to give each leper a silver crucifix. The first one who came to me had his left arm eaten away by the disease. He held up the stump; there was a rosary around it.

He put out his right hand. It was the most foul, fetid, noisome mass of corruption that I ever saw. I held the crucifix above it and dropped it. And it was swallowed up in that volcano of leprosy.

And all of a sudden there were 501 lepers in that camp and I was the 501st. For I had taken that symbol of God's identification with man and refused to identify myself with someone who was a thousand times better on the inside than I.

Then it came over me the awful thing that I had done. I dug my fingers into his hand and pulled out the crucifix then pressed it to his hand and so on for all the other 500 lepers. From that time on I learned to love them by touch, by the incarnational principle.

How was Fulton Sheen, at first, not fully in the moment?

He was distracted by the sight of a leper and feared the disgusting physical decay.

The secret to loving perfectly is to be in the moment. We can't love 10 minutes ago, nor can we love 10 minutes from now at this time. We can only love now, in the moment. Hopefully we will be choosing to love 10 minutes from now, and hopefully we loved 10 minutes ago – but it is only in the present that we make that choice.

Would you ever pull out your phone and text someone in the middle of a game? Of course you wouldn't. **Why do we so easily do things like that in the middle of a conversation?**

What are some of the things that keep you from being fully in the moment when you are interacting with people?

Read Mark 10:35-40, 43-45 – “And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, ‘Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.’ And he said to them, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ And they said to him, ‘Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.’ But Jesus said to them, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?’ And they said to him, ‘We are able.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.’ But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

What are James and John worried about?

What did Jesus teach us about in His response?

Suffering and Service – both of which direct us outward away from our self...to love and selflessness. As our Lord Himself said, “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”(John 15:13) We can lay it down in martyrdom or in service.

To love perfectly is to put God and others before us always. We have to be *in the moment*, be present, to love rather than being worried about something that just happened or that is about to come up. People often said when encountering Mother Teresa or John Paul II, they felt as if they were the only ones in the room because of how well they (Mother Teresa and John Paul II) loved them in the moment.

Challenge: be absorbed in our task, in competition, practice and in loving God and our neighbor in every moment. Walk into a room and ask, “how can I serve?”

“As to the past, let us entrust it to God’s mercy, the future to Divine Providence.
Our task is to live holy the present moment.”

- St. Gianna Mola

UNIT II

ANXIETY



- What is Anxiety?
 - Anxious: experiencing worry, unease or nervousness typically about an imminent event or something.
 - It is a negative interpretation of a lot of arousal.

When do you feel anxious?

Suggestions:

1. *When you are facing uncertainty.*
2. *Isolation and exposure, especially in individual sports.*
3. *Expectation of success*

These three situations, and others like it, can often lead us to over-think.

What do we mean by “over-think”? Over-thinking does what for our performance?

The three situations described above more than likely have the same root: insecurity. Whenever we face uncertainty or an exposure of our talent, it can heighten or develop a sense of insecurity – about our ability, and, even more deeply, our identity. We begin to wonder, “can I even do this?”, “am I good enough?”, “what if I fail?”, etc. As insecurity increases, so does our anxiety.

What is at the root of most insecurity?

A lack of trust. As athletes, we need to be able to trust our stuff when it comes to game time. If we put in the proper amount of time for preparation, what we need to do when we step on the field is trust.

Practical advice (*break these down in discussion as you see fit*):

1. Accept/embrace the tension and nerves as they increase. Turn this into a positive excitement.
 - a. Being nervous and excited have the same body reaction. Both just have a lot of arousal. The name that we give to our feelings is what turns it into nervousness or excitement. We determine this. It is either “Oh man, I don’t want to screw this up.” Or “My body just knows I’m about to do something amazing!”
2. Trust your ability
3. Visualize success rather than doubt
4. 5, 3, 5 breathing (in through nose for 5 seconds, hold for 3, out mouth for 5 seconds)
 - a. Power Breathing
 - i. IF you want to energize, decrease the exhale (3, 1, 2)
 - ii. If you want to relax, increase the exhale (5, 3, 5)
5. When you recognize negative thoughts, picture a stop sign. Then, as that fades out of your mind, also let the negative thought fade.
6. Breakdown your winning feeling – what are the top 8 important aspects of that positive feeling. Before/during your competition, you want these aspects to run through your mind, similar to finding your happy place.

Anxiety is something that creeps into many places of our life. We can get anxious when we think about what happens after graduation, what happens if I don’t have enough money to make my car payment, what if I lose a loved one, on and on and on and on it can go. Just like in competition, our anxiety is intimately connected to insecurity and fear, which can usually boil down to a lack of trust.

What are some of the reasons that make it difficult for us to trust God?

Jer 29:11 – “For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

Mt 6:25-34 – “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day.”

When we lack trust, we often try to control things ourselves. **How does our Lord address that in the above verses? In what ways does pride add to anxiety?**

Luke 1:28-31, 34-35, 38 – “And he came to her and said, “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!” But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.” And Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no husband?” And the angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.” And Mary, said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”

Mary is our model for surrendering our control to God. **How can we better imitate her example of giving up control? What do you need to give up control of?**

Another doubt that we have in our mind is whether or not we are truly loved. When we are insecure in this, again we develop anxiety.

What are ways to deepen our knowledge of God's love for us?

Challenge: try to sit in front of Jesus in the Eucharist once in the next week

UNIT III

FEAR



Pressure is not new to us. (can have a discussion on the most pressure filled moment or something similar to warm them up.)

Pressure can have at least 2 faces

- a) the desire to be excellent for the sake of being excellent or for the sake of God's glory
- b) the desire to be excellent for the purpose of being viewed and honored as great
 - i. here we run into the *fear of failure* – this causes a negative pressure

How would you describe the fear of failure? Have any of you felt the fear of failure before?

What does fear do to us?

Makes us play small on the field, perform small in the classroom, paralyze us, etc.

Read Mt 26:69-7. “Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a maid came up to him, and said, ‘You also were with Jesus the Galilean.’ But he denied it before them all, saying, ‘I do not know what you mean.’ And when he went out to the porch, another maid saw him, and she said to the bystanders, ‘This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.’ And again he denied it with an oath, ‘I do not know the man.’ After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, ‘Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.’ Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, ‘I do not know the man.’ And immediately the cock crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, ‘Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly.”

What did fear do to St. Peter?

What are your fears as student-athletes?

Ken Ravizza found that in the experience of athletes during their “greatest moment” in sports, 80% said they felt no fear of failure and were immersed in the activity.

Sometimes when we fear failure and “play small”, we stop risking greatness. One way to fight this: be “task-conscious” rather than “self-conscious”. (Simply put, this means focusing on the actual task before you rather than yourself and what others might think, etc.)

Why are we often so self-conscious when we compete? How does being “task-conscious” help overcome fear of failure?

Identity – Do you guys feel better about yourself when you succeed?

We often find our worth in our achievements. This is a leading cause of our fear of failure. Who we are is not defined or measured by our success or failure. In other words – PUT IT IN PERSPECTIVE.

What are some ways we can “take advantage” of failure? Discuss with the story below.

“Jim Marshall, former defensive player for the Minnesota Vikings, relates what could easily have made him into a failure. In a game against the San Francisco 49ers, Marshall spotted the football on the ground. He scooped it up and ran for a touchdown as the crowd cheered. But he ran the wrong way. He scored for the wrong team and on national television.

“It was the most devastating moment of his life. The shame was overpowering. But during halftime, he thought, ‘If you make a mistake, you got to make it right. I realized I had a choice. I could sit in my misery or I could do something about it.’ Pulling himself together for the second half, he played some of his best football ever and contributed to his team’s victory.

“Nor did he stop there. He spoke to groups. He answered letter that poured in from people who finally had the courage to admit their own shameful experiences. He heightened his concentration during games. Instead of letting the experience define him, he took control of it. He used it to become a better player and, he believes, a better person.” (Carol Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, page 33-34.)

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Read Matthew 14:26-33. “But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out for fear. But immediately he spoke to them, saying, ‘Take heart, it is I; have no fear.’ And Peter answered him, ‘Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water.’ He said, ‘Come.’ So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, ‘Lord, save me.’ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, ‘O man of little faith, why did you doubt?’ And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’”

This passage speaks a lot into trust, and Jesus’ command to “be not afraid” also challenges us to be courageous.

How might fear affect our relationship with God?

We can start to doubt His goodness, we can become bitter, we can make bad decisions cause we take things into our own hands, etc.

What do we have to fear as Christian people? Nothing. **What do we fear though?** Death, suffering, embarrassment, failure, loss, etc.

As Christians, we should be a people of hope! *“It is not that they know the details of what awaits them, but they know in general terms that their life will not end in emptiness.”* Benedict XVI

What would a life ending in emptiness look like? Have you ever had moments where you felt empty?

If we hope in the reality that our life will never be empty with Jesus Christ, we have no reason to fear. That is why Scripture tells us to “be not afraid” about 365 times. It reminds us that we were not made for this life, but the life to come.

Let’s discuss the following quote from Pope Benedict XVI: *“The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life.”*

What does this new life look like? Why should courage be a fundamental mark of a Christian?

Why is it hard to hope at times? Because we suffer.

When we suffer, it can be hard to believe good will come which will supersede the suffering. Our Holy Father continues:

“It is important to know that I can always continue to hope, even if in my own life, or the historical period in which I am living, there seems to be nothing left to hope for. Only the great certitude of hope that my own life and history in general, despite all failures, are held firm by the indestructible power of Love, and that this gives them their meaning and importance, only this kind of hope can then give the courage to act and to persevere.”

When we become certain that God, who is pure Love, holds all things in His hands, and begin to trust Him, we will be courageous. Do you remember when you were a child, or have you seen other children run and jump into a pool towards their father, confident he will catch them? That is an action based off great trust and hope. Similarly, when we can begin to hope in the God who made us, we will have a similar “courageousness” to the way we act!

If we are truly striving to serve the Lord, is failure possible?

- Sin, or choosing something counter to God’s will, is the only way we can “fail”. This only becomes true failure if we do not repent. If we sin, but get back up and seek forgiveness, there is no lasting failure.
- God doesn’t judge us based off of our accomplishments but instead off our love.

If we love at every moment, we cannot fail. Don’t fail today by choosing to fear tomorrow.

Read Acts 4:1-21 (If you have the time and feel this would bring the point home, then read it. The text is not included here due to the length.)

How is St. Peter now courageous?

Challenge – Spend 15 minutes in contemplative prayer.

“How can one abandon oneself to God and have confidence in Him if one only knows Him from a distance, by hearsay? The heart does not awaken to confidence until it awakens to love; we need to feel the gentleness and the tenderness of the Heart of Jesus. This cannot be obtained except by the habit of meditative prayer, by this tender repose in God which is contemplative.”

- Jacques Philippe

UNIT IV

ATTITUDE



Thomas Edison once said, “There is much more opportunity than there are people to see it.”

What does he mean?

Does anyone know who Roger Bannister is and what is significant about what he accomplished?

In 1954, he broke the 4 minute mile for the first time in history. Nobody thought it was possible, until then. Within the next year, dozens of people were breaking the 4 minute mile just like Roger.

What is the correlation between Roger breaking the four minute mile for the first time, and then dozens breaking it immediately after him? New type of shoe? New sports drink?

It was because the world was convinced it couldn't be done. This is an example of a self-limiting belief. Self-limiting beliefs lead to self-defeating behaviors – like no one pushing themselves to break that time.

From John Maxwell's *The Winning Attitude*: “While still young and weak, an elephant is tied by a heavy chain to an immovable iron stake. He discovers that, no matter how hard he tries, he cannot break the chain or move the stake. Then, no matter how large and strong the elephant becomes, he continues to believe he cannot move as long as he sees the stake in the ground beside him...many intelligent adults...are restrained in thoughts, actions and results. They never move further than the boundaries of their self-imposed limitations.”

What are some other self-limiting beliefs?

What are **YOUR** self-limiting beliefs?

If you have ever started driving a different type of car that you have never driven before, chances are you will begin to notice every other car on the road of that same model. Similarly, when you are in an airport, with all the noise and chaos, you can still hear your name on the intercom even though you aren't paying attention. We have a radar mechanism in our mind called the Reticular Activating System. It also filters our thoughts/beliefs. If we are convinced something bad is going to happen, this radar mechanism filters in things that we can immediately connect to our belief. This is followed by self-talk such as "I knew that was going to happen" or "that always happens to me", etc. The good news is we can have a similar response with positive thoughts and beliefs. We just need to choose to think positively.

Practical advice 1:

- State the self-limiting belief and all self-talk associated with it (e.g. I can't beat this guy. I am not helping the team right now.).
- State the exact opposite (I can beat this guy. I am going to help the team right now.).

A survivor of a Nazi concentration camp, Victor Frankl, said, "The last of the human freedoms is to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances." Our attitude is often connected to our thoughts and beliefs, which are often simply our opinion. If our opinion of our self is negative and self-limiting, it will probably lead to self-defeating behaviour.

Gary Mack – "How we think affects how we feel, and how we feel affects how we perform."

Is this true?

John Maxwell again: “We are either the masters or the victims of our attitudes. It is a matter of personal choice. Who we are today is the result of choices made yesterday. Tomorrow we will become what we choose today. To change means to choose to change.”

Psychologist Carol Dweck, in her book *Mindset*, defines two mindsets:

1. **Growth Mindset:** based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts.
2. **Fixed Mindset:** based on the belief that your qualities are carved in stone, which creates an urgency to prove yourself over and over.

Take a moment and think this one through. In what areas of our life do we have a “growth” or “fixed” mindset?

She explains:

1. “Those with the growth mindset found success in doing their best, in learning and improving. And this is exactly what we find in the champions.”
2. “Those with the growth mindset found setbacks motivating. They’re informative. They’re a wake-up call.”

Practical Advice 2:

- If things in our sport or in life seem to be closed off to us, don’t dwell on what we can’t do. Instead, make of list of things you can do. If you don’t get much playing time, focus on what you can do, and do it to the best of your ability. Strive to develop a growth mindset.

Part of having a positive attitude is learning to be grateful for all the blessings in our life.

Write down 10 things/experiences you are thankful for, and 10 people in your life you are thankful for.

- | | |
|-----|-----|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |
| 4. | 4. |
| 5. | 5. |
| 6. | 6. |
| 7. | 7. |
| 8. | 8. |
| 9. | 9. |
| 10. | 10. |

I can do all things in Him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13

How well do we believe this? Do we believe we can be happy living the Christian life...waiting to have sex until marriage, not getting drunk, giving to others until after it hurts, etc?

In life, many times our attitude can turn negative when we face a hardship and experience suffering.

Pick up your cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23

Why does Jesus say this? Is He a cruel Savior?

The wisdom of the Church and Her saints tells us that every cross in our life is an affectionate gift from our Lord.

How might this be true?

Being true doesn't automatically make the experience easier, does it? What should we do in the times of suffering?

Job 2:9-10 – Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!” But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?”

Mother Teresa said suffering was a wasted gift. **Why?**

Col 1:24 – Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body that is, the church.

Why should we as Christians have a positive attitude?

Jn 10:10 – I came that you may have life and have it abundantly.

Jn 12:24 – Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Philippians 3:13-14 – Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

In giving we receive – St. Francis of Assisi.

Where does your attitude need a swift kick?

Close with Philippians 2:3-8: Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but in humility regard others better than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, and being born in the likeness of men. Being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Challenge: Thank the Lord for this day, and look for opportunities to serve with humility.

UNIT V

EMOTIONS



Have you ever been emotional before/after/during competition or practice? How did it affect you?

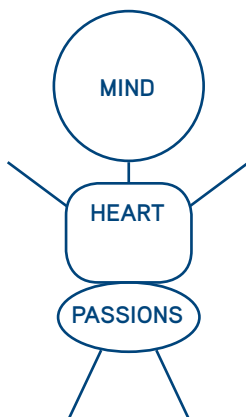
If performance is impacted by distractions, we know often from experience that our emotions can be one of our biggest distractions.

If we don't learn to control our emotions, our emotions will control us.

Have emotions ever hurt the performance of an athlete? When are you most likely going to have an emotional breakdown?

So when might emotion be a good thing?

Discuss instances like saving someone from a burning building, or jumping in the pool to save a child, etc. Our emotions give us that rush which helps our will act on what our mind is telling us is the right thing.



Our mind is meant to govern us, letting our will know what the right thing is to choose. Emotions/passions serve that choice. At the same time, emotions/passions can become so strong, that instead of serving that choice they control it.

What are the other areas where uncontrollable emotions, especially anger, often affect us?

Eph 4:26-27, 31 – “Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice.”

Exact Sports gives the following four pieces of advice to control anger in competition (discuss each point):

1. Before you do anything irrational, try to talk through your anger and let it give your body a confidence boost that can make you run faster and play even harder.
2. If you don't learn how to let the little things go during the game, you won't be able to jump back from it the entire game.
3. Communicate with your teammates and coaches. When you keep things bottled up inside that happened in practice or during the first half of the game, it gets the best of you and then your anger takes over
4. Use the anger or frustration you have from your mistake and try to focus only on the next good play you are about to make

Any of these points seem to be pertinent to you in particular?

How might excessive emotion/anger distract us from our relationship with God? What are other things it can lead us to?

There are three main ways anger surfaces as a bad and sinful thing: blind wrath (closes the eyes, mind, ears to truth and judges something before we know the facts), *bitterness*, and *revengeful resentment* (these two poison us to cast out love from the situation).

In the “Our Father”, it says “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” God will forgive us in the same degree that we are willing to forgive.

Why is forgiveness such an important part of our relationships? Why is it so hard to forgive?

Discuss – Jesus cleansing the Temple; anger is okay unless it leads to sin, etc.

“The power of wrath is a force directed toward the difficult achievement, toward the thing beyond the easy grasp, ever ready to expose itself wherever an ‘arduous good’ waits to be conquered.” Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*

As we discussed above with emotions, anger can be a great thing if we are smart about it and allow it to help motivate us to achieve something that is good and worthy of our pursuit.

Beatitudes – “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

What is the first thing you think of when you hear the word “meekness”?

Meekness – the virtue to moderate our anger and maintain a serene mind and heart in the midst of turbulent actions and emotions; *power under control*

John 18:19-23. “The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered him, ‘I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together; I have said nothing secretly. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me, what I said to them; they know what I said.’ When he had said this, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, ‘Is that how you answer the high priest?’ Jesus answered him, ‘If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?’”

What do you think of Jesus’ reaction?

To be without any surge of anger is not to be meek and virtuous. Again, anger can be a great tool. To be meek and virtuous is to have power over the anger, and to use it to serve your pursuit of the good.

Meekness gives us freedom – real freedom; a true man is not ruled by his emotions

How can being angry with yourself be harmful?

Challenge: What is your hot spot? If a person, pray for them when you see them. If an event or activity, look for something positive in it.

UNIT VI

CONFIDENCE



Harvey Penick, one of golf's greatest instructors, said "if there is doubt in your mind, how can your muscles know what they are expected to do."

What do you think?

Jim Abbott – "I worked very hard. I felt I could play the game. The only thing that could stop me was myself."

Confidence comes from practice and preparation. In practice, we have the opportunity to train our minds as well as our bodies.

What are some practical ways we can do this?

Routines help – when we analyze and decide how we are going to handle a situation, a routine helps bring comfort, and turn that thinking mechanism off so our body can perform. Routines should be the same in practice and in the game.

What are your routines?

Michael Jordan said he would walk onto the court for every game believing he was the best out there until someone proved him wrong. Not all of us will be the best out there like Michael Jordan, but being confident will still go a long way.

How do we let defeat build us up rather than destroy our self-confidence? See it as an opportunity for improvement.

How does trusting your stuff translate into our relationship with God?

Confidence in God has nothing to do with our ability, but entirely God's. "We must definitively renounce the concept of attaining our goal by our own natural forces, and expect everything from the holy new life that Christ has infused into us in Baptism." (Dietrich Von Hildebrand, Transformation in Christ) **Translate this.**

Genesis 6:11-22 –Noah – Confidence =Trust in the process

- What does God ask Noah to do?
- Who will accompany him on the arc?
- What did he do?
 - "This Noah did" He built it
- How big was the arc?
- Would that have been a quick process?
 - Not a chance.
- What would the rest of the world be thinking about Noah?
 - That he was crazy
- What kept Noah going?
 - He trusted the process. He went and pounded in one board at a time and had Confidence that God was going to come through. He wasn't questioning it every day, he was going to work and pounding in board after board without knowing exactly how he was going to get 2 of every animal into this arc.

- Where do we need to focus on the process and trust the process?
 - Sports –we work every day and don't see a huge change from day to day but trust that if we do the reps at 100% we will get better.
 - School –Trust that if we put the time and effort in, we will eventually learn the material.
 - Faith –Keep praying and trust that God will answer our prayer. Live today, be in the moment, and control what you can control. Then trust that God will take care of what we can't.

1. Need confidence in God's omnipotence: Luke 1:37 – “For with God nothing will be impossible.” **Why is this an important aspect?**

2. Confidence in His love FOR US as well as in His mercy: *Eph 2:4-5* – “But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” **Why is this important?**

3. Confidence in His omniscience: *Ps 139:8* – “If I ascend to heaven, thou art there! If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there”

- a. God is constantly aware of us and is presiding over our destinies.
- b. We are continually in the hands of God and secure in His all-powerful and all-wise love.
- c. Nothing can escape His glance – **How does that make you feel? Why is this an important aspect for us?**

4. Confidence that we have all been called by God individually: *Is 42:6* – “I the Lord have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you”

- a. God not only loves us, He also wills to be loved by us. **Why is this one important?**

Our confidence in God is not mere optimism. Our growth in holiness requires our full effort. At the same time, it is only through Christ and Christ alone that a real victory over our sinfulness can be obtained. **Phil2:12-13**– “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Why, do you think, is this God's design?

What can help us grow in this understanding? A truly contrite heart – always in hope. No sin, if repented in contrition, can keep us separated from God. His mercy is bigger than us.

Remember the quote from St. Benedict XVI: *“The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life.”*

Let us confidently hope in God, who is all good, and pray that our trust may increase.

Challenge: pray daily this week, “Jesus, I trust in you.”

UNIT VII

MOTIVATION



Have you ever wanted to skip practice? Why/why not?

Have you ever wanted to skip a competition/game? Why/why not?

Why are you a college athlete?

List off other things that motivate a person to play. (competition within a team; winning and the desire to win; being the best; adversity; gratitude for talents and opportunity; stress relief, escape; the challenge and growth potential; anger; glory, honor, recognition, scholarship)

Describe the power of motivation.

What are aspects of the game that challenge our motivation?

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

What was God’s motivation for creating us and redeeming us?

John 3:16

Do you think love can be a motivation for athletes? Love of God? Why might love be a good motivation?

(brings out the best in you as you try to please one you love; does not depend on circumstances; love directs your attention away from yourself and the inner gremlins of your mind)

Story of a martyr. Use this as an example to talk about the greatest motivation – love.

2Cor 5:14 – “For the love of Christ impels us” St. Paul tells the Corinthians that he and his companions do all ministry out of love for Christ.

How might this apply to us in all things we do?

1Jn 4:19 – “We love, because He first loved us.” Our love is a response always to the love He shows us. Therefore our competition can be an expression of love. **Why/how?**

Rom 12:1 – I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.

Read 1Cor 13:4-7 and breakdown each phrase and the benefit it will have as an athlete.

Revisit our foundation – sons and daughters of God. When love is our motivation for everything, we allow God, who is love, to build on our foundation, making us even stronger. And when the winds and rain come, we will remain standing.

Gratitude helps us maintain the perspective of love. A heart full of gratitude will easily become a heart full of love.

Challenge: find ways to make the Love of Christ your motivation this week in all your activities.